

FEBRUARY 16, 1973

LEON SPINKS: NEW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

LEON SPINKS WEDNESDAY NIGHT BECAME THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT
BOXING CHAMPION OF THE WORLD, DEFEATING MUHAMMAD ALI IN A
FIFTEEN-ROUND SPLIT DECISION. WITH MORE DETAILS, HERE IS
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VOICE:

THE WRITER-HUMORIST MARK TWAIN ONCE SAID: "AN EXPERT
IS ANYBODY WHO IS FIFTY MILES FROM HOME." THE SO-CALLED
BOXING EXPERTS SHOULD HAVE STAYED AT HOME WEDNESDAY NIGHT,
BECAUSE NONE OF THEM GAVE 24-YEAR-OLD LEON SPINKS THE
SLIGHTEST CHANCE TO TAKE MUHAMMAD ALI'S HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING
TITLE. IN FACT, SPINKS HIMSELF DID NOT SEEM TO CONFIDENT THAT
HE COULD DO IT. BEFORE THE FIGHT HE WAS ASKED WHY HE TOOK THE
FIGHT AT ALL. HE FRANKLY ADMITTED HE DID NOT WANT TO PASS
UP A 300-THOUSAND-DOLLAR PAYDAY, SPINKS' SHARE OF THE GATE
MONEY AGREED TO BEFORE HAND.

BUT THEN HE GOT INTO THE RING AND SWARMED ALL OVER ALI.
SPINKS, WHO HAD HAD ONLY SEVEN PROFESSIONAL BOUTS WITH ONLY
MEDIocre FIGHTERS, HAD NEVER FOUGHT MORE THAN TEN ROUNDS BEFORE,
AND THE BOXING EXPERTS SAID HE COULDN'T DO IT, THAT HE WOULD TIRE
HIMSELF OUT. BUT INSTEAD IT WAS ALI WHO TIRED, WHOSE THIRTY-SIX-
YEAR-OLD LEGS JUST COULD NOT GIVE HIM THE SPEED HE USED TO HAVE.
IN THE LAST ROUND THE TWO FIGHTERS TOOK TURNS BATTERING EACH
OTHER, EACH MANAGING TO FIND BURSTS OF NEEDED NERGY. AND IT
WAS THAT LAST ROUND THAT DECIDED THE FIGHT JUDGES, BECAUSE SPINKS
STAGGERED ALI AT LEAST TWICE JUST BEFORE THE BELL ENDED THE
FINAL ROUND. AND LEON SPINKS, OLYMPIC LIGHT-HEAVYWEIGHT
CHAMPION, HAD BECOME THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE
WORLD. HERE IS WHAT HE HAD TO SAY ABOUT IT.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- SPINKS

"I TRAINED HARD, I TRIED HARD. I KNEW IT WOULD BE A HARD KIND OF FIGHT TO BEAT MY MAN, ALI. AND I KNOW I HAD TO REALLY SUFFER AND DEDICATE MYSELF TO PHYSICAL TRAINING TO BEAT HIM. I HEARD I HAD A BIG OPPORTUNITY TO BEAT MY MAN. A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY I CAN DO IT. AND I PROVED IT. AND I THANK GOD."

VOICE:

NOW THAT HE IS THE CHAMPION, LEON SPINKS WAS ASKED IF HE WILL GIVE ALI A CHANCE TO WIN THE TITLE BACK. HE SAID HE WOULD, BUT THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN OR IF HE WOULD FIGHT SOMEONE ELSE BEFORE FIGHTING ALI AGAIN. SPINKS WASN'T TOO MUCH INTERESTED IN TALKING. HE WAS STILL TOO EXCITED. ONLY FIVE MINUTES EARLIER HE HAD BECOME THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION. OF THE WORLD, DEFEATING THE GREAT MUHAMMAD ALI TO EARN THE DECISION.

ALI HIMSELF WAS QUIET AND SUBDUED, HIS RIGHT EYE NEARLY CLOSED FROM THE POUNDING HE HAD TAKEN FROM SPINKS. WHEN HE ANSWERED QUESTIONS, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FIGHT, HE SPOKE SO QUIETLY IT WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HIM.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- ALI

"WELL, NATURALLY YOU WANT TO GO OUT (RETIRE) WITH THE TITLE. AND I THOUGHT I BOXED WELL, REALLY. IT WAS A CLOSE FIGHT, BUT HE (SPINKS) WAS THE MOST AGGRESSIVE, I THINK. I IMAGINE HE WON. FOR WHATEVER REASON HE TOOK IT (THE TITLE), HE TOOK IT. YOU CAN'T TAKE THAT FROM HIM (DENY IT). I WOULD LIKE TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE, AND THAT'S TO BE THE THIRD MAN TO REGAIN THE TITLE. BUT IT'S (LOSING THE TITLE) JUST ANOTHER EXPERIENCE OF LIFE. IT'S NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT."

VOICE:

LATER, IN HIS DRESSING ROOM, ALI WOULD SAY HE UNDERESTIMATED LEON SPINKS, BUT THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRST MAN TO WIN THE HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE THREE TIMES. HE'LL BE BACK AGAIN, HE SAID. AS FOR THE NEW CHAMPION, THERE 'S SAID TO BE A CONTRACT THAT SAYS THE WINNER OF THE ALI-SPINKS BOUT WOULD FIGHT NUMBER ONE

CONTENDER KEN NORTON. BUT THAT WILL COME LATER. SPINKS VISITED ALI IN THE FORMER CHAMPION'S DRESSING ROOM AFTER THE FIGHT.

"YOU'RE A GREAT FIGHTER AND A FINE MAN," HE TOLD ALI.

AND ALI REPLIED, "THANKS. YOU AIN'T SO BAD YOURSELF."

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NOTE: TAPE INSERTS COURTESY OF COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM.

THIS PIECE SHOULD BE USED WITHIN 24 HOURS OF END OF FIGHT. THAT'S BY 11 P.M. THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16. IT CANNOT BE USED AFTER 11 P.M.

RK/PY